

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 1487 without my signature.

This bill would require every hospital to establish an infection control program and collect data regarding hospital-acquired infections. It requires hospitals to make adjustments for risk and report it to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD). The bill requires the OSHPD to make the information public and to transmit it to the Department of Health Services.

Infection control programs have considerable merit and are currently in effect. The Department of Health Services and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of HealthCare Organizations scrutinize hospital infection control programs and the National Quality Initiative is expected to more than double the number of quality indicators tracked by May 2005. This calls into question the need of a new program to address this issue.

Additionally, the lack of data auditing in this bill is problematic. Not auditing avoids some costs but it also raises concerns about the quality and validity of the data collected and hence the overall effectiveness of the program. The absence of data auditing and review by impartial clinical experts may call into question the quality and ultimate validity of the data on hospital-acquired infections.

This bill imposes significant costs on hospitals and the OSHPD. Facing implementation of a number of well-intentioned but expensive mandates, many hospitals are not in a position to absorb the cost of a new program or reporting requirement. I believe that we must carefully weigh the value of additional mandates on hospitals against the potential of pushing some hospitals over the financial brink.

Implementation of this bill would impact the Health Data Planning Fund within OSHPD and could result in a deficiency within this Fund. In order to meet the requirements of the bill, OSHPD would have to redirect current staff and resources impacting existing programs and the delivery of services.

Finally, given the need for proper infection control, I encourage the hospital community and the medical community to collaborate to ensure that patients are protected from acquiring infections while in the hospital.

For the reasons stated above I am returning this measure without my signature.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger